

MINUTES OF THE PARK GATEWAYS WORKING GROUP MEETING

2pm, Tuesday 23rd March 2004

Cairngorms National Park Authority office, Grantown-on-Spey

Present

Bob Wilson	Chair, Working Group, CNPA Board
Daniel Alexander	CNPA Head of Communications
Murray Ferguson	CNPA Head of Visitor Services & Recreation
Jim Gillies	Forestry Commission
Andrew Harper	CNPA Head of Social & Economic Development
Bruce Luffman	CNPA Board
Willie McKenna	CNPA Board
Andrew Rafferty	CNPA Board
Graham Smith	Highlands of Scotland Tourist Board
Debbie Strang	CNPA Sustainable Tourism Officer

Apologies

Alistair Clunas	Mar Lodge
Gregor Rimell	CNPA Board
David Selfridge	CNPA Board
Margaret Wearmouth	Aberdeen & Grampian Tourist Board

In Attendance

Aaron Lawton	Aaron Lawton Associates
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Action

Welcome and Apologies

1. The Chair opened the meeting and noted the apologies.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

2. There were no amendments to the minutes from the meeting held on Friday 12th March 2004.

Matters Arising

3. The Chair said that he would raise the issue of gaelic with the Board at the next meeting. Debbie Strang explained that some preparatory work and initial thinking on the subject was being prepared by Park Staff, and the Highland Council policy on gaelic and signage would be considered as part of this.

Chair

Presentation

4. Aaron Lawton explained that he had completed the draft full site survey and this included photographs and maps of 26 entry points and 41 locations. Each site survey includes all the information that might be required for discussions with planners, roads authorities etc.

5. There are a number of issues arising, and one of the most important is the requirement to create a sense of arrival at the point of entry to the National Park. The best example of this is the A939 north of Grantown, where the best location for the marker is 2km inside the boundary.
6. Closely linked, is the information provision for the visitor and how this should be organised. Aaron Lawton described 3 methods for doing this:
 - Information Centre - where a sign would be located close to the marker to direct visitors to visitor information sites or centres.
 - Information Radio - this method is not common in the UK but can also direct visitors to information sites. The Working Group did not feel that this was a sensible approach in an area that has extremely variable radio reception.
 - Information Point - this would provide information boards in a layby.
7. Debbie Strang agreed to investigate existing research on the effectiveness of roadside information. There was a discussion on whether markers should be located close to laybys if available, as this could provide the site for the Information Point. It was agreed that the availability of visitor information in laybys should not dictate the marker location; and the best site to create a sense of arrival should take precedence. It was agreed that preliminary work on visitor information provision was required to consider whether the Park might wish to provide information points in laybys sometime in the future, as this has a significant bearing on the selection of sites for the point of entry markers.
8. Inextricably linked to this discussion is the issue of the quality of the environment around the marker. Drumochter has been discussed previously by the Group and recognised as a key site and unfortunately a very degraded environment. It requires a landscape approach, a rationalisation of signage and upgrading of the layby. It was agreed to consider whether Drumochter and the other sites on the trunk roads should be given additional attention by a landscape architect.
9. The Chair also raised the problem of litter picking along the trunk roads and suggested this be kept under review. Highland Council has recently commissioned a study on where the current grant to HOST might be spent in the future, and it was agreed Debbie Strang should contact the Council to see whether a project this type might be suitable for funding.
10. It was discussed whether any information should be placed on the back of the markers, and Aaron said that this issue should be considered in the design phase, as some structures will require placing at an angle to the road.
11. It was agreed that in due course the Working Group members might be able to provide valuable local contacts with landowners of potential sites.

DS**DS/MF****DS****Date of Next Meeting**

12. It was agreed to meet on 21st May at 2pm at Dinnet Village Hall.

The meeting finished at 3.30pm